

**Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee Testimony  
Of An-Ming Truxes, Board of Governors, Hill-Stead Museum, Farmington  
Tuesday, February 16, 2016 at 4:00pm**

**SUBJECT: Request for continued funding for Connecticut Humanities Council at current level in the state budget for the biennium ending June 30, 2017**

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is An-Ming Truxes, a resident of Westbrook. I am on the Board of Governors at the Hill-Stead Museum located in Farmington. I am here today to comment on the Governor's proposed budget (H.B. 5044), and to request that the Connecticut Humanities Council receive funding at the current level in the state budget for the biennium ending June 30, 2017.

The governor has proposed reforming the earmark process by cutting certain line-item grants such as arts, tourism, and other community services by 25 percent and then consolidating them into a competitive grant pool to be administered by the Office of the State Comptroller. In his budget address on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, Governor Malloy said that "we must concentrate on the core functions of state government. Functions that fall outside of those core services must be considered on merit alone. We must transition toward making recipients of state funding compete for available dollars based on proven results."

The Governor's concept of a competitive grants pool is exactly how the Connecticut Humanities Fund functions. In recent years, about half of the Connecticut Humanities' annual state appropriation of \$1.85 million (\$990,000) is re-granted to heritage and cultural institutions statewide, through a peer-review process that ensures only the best and most effective programs and projects are funded. You cannot ask for a more rigorous and transparent system of assessing each applicant's worthiness based on published standards and criteria that are results-driven. Panels of expert advisors, along with Connecticut Humanities staff and board members, are involved at multiple levels of scrutiny in the awards adjudication process.

This merit-based system meets three performance measures important to the state:

1. **Fair accessibility to humanities resources.** Funded programs have broad geographical reach and serve heritage and cultural organizations of all sizes and all types.
2. **Broad utilization of humanities resources.** Consumers of humanities-funded programs come from broad segments of the state's population, including ethnic and cultural specific groups, at risk youth, people with disability, elderly population, among others.
3. **Cost effectiveness of humanities resources.** For more than 20 years, the Connecticut Humanities has proven, through its rigorous merit-based system of awards adjudication, to be a responsible and sound steward of public funds. Connecticut Humanities-funded programs support all areas of the state and ensure that all communities – regardless of geographic location or economic condition – are equitably served.

For the above reasons, I and my fellow members of the Board of Governors at the Hill-Stead Museum are proud to receive competitive grant funding from the Connecticut Humanities. In particular, Connecticut Humanities funding has allowed Hill-Stead to present its most popular public program, the nationally recognized Sunken Garden Poetry Festival, which brings thousands of people from across the state and region each summer to enjoy poetry and music in a beautiful outdoor setting. The Sunken Garden Poetry Festival features Pulitzer Prize-winners, United States Poets Laureate, as well as Connecticut award-winning poets and regional musicians in a five-performance series in Farmington. In 2016, the Poetry Festival will feature current United States Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera, the first Latino U.S. Poet Laureate; Brian Turner, a United States Army Iraq War veteran; and Heather McHugh, recipient of the prestigious MacArthur "Genius" Grant. Each of the five authors participating in 2016 will lead a poetry writing workshop, participate in an interactive interview with a live audience, and take the main stage to read to Festival attendees. This extraordinary opportunity for residents from around the state to discover and connect with different cultures and generations through poetry would not be possible without grants from Connecticut Humanities and support at the state level.

Finally, I would like to underscore that the humanities directly relate to the core functions of government that the Governor delineated in his budget address, "namely: protecting the public, ensuring a social safety net, building a strong economy, safeguarding our environment, providing

a public education, and administering justice.” In fact, the humanities – defined as the study and interpretation of the human experience and behavior through history, literature, art, theater, music and languages – are critical to building a pluralistic democratic society and are among the greatest sources of strength we possess as a nation. Without the humanities and the arts, it would not be possible for us to compete in a complex globalized world.

I hope that the Appropriations Committee will help to maintain the Connecticut Humanities funding at current level for the biennium ending in June 30, 2107.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,  
An-Ming Truxes

